

SHORT STORY **A MIND OF HIS OWN**

Denis Rancourt

This boy was an independent thinker. He had his own idea about everything. He would rather not have an opinion on a subject rather than simply accept someone else's opinion.

He just did not believe anything he was simply told. It had to make sense to him. He had to understand it. It needed to be logical. There had to be reasons for it to be true or he did not accept it.

One time he thought that maybe all of the world he knew might just be in his head. Maybe only his own thinking was real and all the rest was just what he was imagining. Maybe even his feelings and his sensations were all just happening in his head. Maybe, he thought, there was not really a world outside of him.

How could he find out? If he asked someone then maybe that someone was just a person he was imagining. And maybe he only heard an answer he was imagining. How could he know that the outside of him was real?



“

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”

He knew that he could think about what he wanted to think about. He knew that he was in charge of his own mind. So he knew he existed. He thought he must exist somewhere and he knew he always only imagined one place where he was at. He was never everywhere but always just at one place.

He noticed that he could not predict what would happen later, except when it was obvious. So he concluded that there must be all the people and things that he could not see and hear at any one time. He concluded that he must be in a world bigger than just what he could see and hear and feel at the moment. Even if that world were all imaginary it was bigger than what he was imagining alone.

So he concluded that he lived in a world that was more than just him. He decided to believe that the world was real.

Therefore, he decided that the world would not just carry him where it wanted but that he would be his own person. He started telling others that he was his own person and that he would decide things for himself. He never let this go. And his parents and friends came to respect that he was his own person. Δ

Denis Rancourt is a physicist and teacher. He was formerly a professor of physics at the University of Ottawa (Canada) before the university suspended him over his activism and experimental, participatory teaching practices in 2008.

Children have to be educated, but they have also to be left to educate themselves.

— **Ernest Dimnet, writer**

Because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are.

— **Bertolt Brecht, playwright**

If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.

— **Carl Jung, psychologist**

Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army.

— **Edward Everett, educator**

I doubt that the imagination can be suppressed. If you truly eradicated it in a child, he would grow up to be an eggplant.

— **Ursula K. Le Guin, author**

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The Map Mathare Project (map on p55)

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